

# ***FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET***

**Meeting Date:** October 8, 2015

**Agenda Item:** 2015 Elk Plan Objective Adjustments

**Division:** Wildlife

**Action Needed:** Final

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 30 minutes

## **Background**

Population objectives in Montana's elk plan were established in 2005 with few adjustments since. The original document allows for any proposed change of merit to be considered by the Commission as a proposal for public comment. FWP is proposing elk plan adjustments in two areas: the Bob Marshall Elk Management Unit in the South and Middle Forks of the Flathead and the Swan (HDs 130, 140, 141, 150 and 151), and the Bitterroot Valley (HDs 204, 240, 250, 260, 261, 262 and 270) (Table 1). Elk in the Bob Marshall EMU winter mostly on public land and should not be considered over objective, which they have been recently. Proposed changes in the Bitterroot are designed to better reflect recent changes in HD boundaries and facilitate management while slightly increasing the valley-wide objective from 7,470 to 7,550. The proposed changes below differ slightly from those presented in August based on public comment. A number comments on the Bitterroot HDs said that by raising the bull:cow ratio objectives the HDs would never be able to go back to a standard package general season. The final proposal presented here (with changes from the original highlighted) is for no changes in bull ratio objectives and establishes a range for calf:cow ratios. It also corrects an error in that the bull:cow ratio in HD 250 should be 10:100.

**Table 1.** Proposed elk plan adjustments for 2015.

HD	Current Objectives		Revised Proposed Objectives	
	Numbers	Ratios per 100 Cows	Numbers	Ratios per 100 Cows
130, 140 & 141	225	None	150-320	None
150 & 151	400	None	310-500	None
204	1,320 for 204 &	25 Calves & 10 bulls	600	20-30 calves & 10 bulls
261	261 Combined	25 Calves & 10 bulls	700	20-30 calves & 10 bulls
240	750	25 Calves	1000	20-30 calves
250	2000	25 Calves & 10 Bulls	1400	20-30 Calves & 10 Bulls
260	None		50	None
262	None		0	None
270*	3400	25 Calves & 15 Bulls	3800	20-30 Calves & 15 Bulls
Bitterroot Total	7470		7550	

\*The HD 270 proposal also would raise the subobjective for elk on publically accessible land (i.e. not on the CB Ranch) from 2,600 to 3,000.

## **Public Involvement Process & Results**

Flathead Wildlife Inc. and other sportsmen support the R1 proposals. Those in Region 2 were vetted at public meetings on July 7-8 where 35 people attended, including members of the Ravalli County Fish and Wildlife Association who generally supported the proposals. Of 15 public comments received, six spoke directly to the Bitterroot about changes in HD boundaries and bull:cow ratios as mentioned above. All comments are in the Commission packet.

## **Alternatives and Analysis**

None considered.

## **Agency Recommendation & Rationale**

FWP recommends the Commission adopt the proposed elk plan adjustments.

## **Proposed Motion**

I move the Commission adopt the proposed elk plan adjustments in Regions 1 and 2 as presented by FWP.